

ARMENIA SCHOOL CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM NEWSLETTER



January 2006

Chambarak School #2 Cooperates with Armenian Relief Society



For many years, Chambarak School #2 in Gegharkunik region has cooperated with the Armenian Relief Society (<http://www.ars1910.org/>). Hratsin Harutyunyan, a Russian language schoolteacher of the school, also a member of the Armenian Relief Society, was the one to establish this cooperation. Hratsin has organized several projects and events since the time she started to work for ARS in Armenia. As a result of the projects implemented by Hratsin, the schoolteachers and students regularly received small gifts from ARS, such as educational materials and stationery.

With the help of Chambarak School #2 Internet Computer Center, Hratsin was able to establish a two-way cooperation between ARS office in Armenia and the USA. The Computer Center also hosted the most parts of the projects and events implemented by Hratsin.

Recently in Chambarak School #2, a big celebration was organized to honor ARS Los Angeles members Janet and Grand Margarians, Garry Simonyan and Hovsep Samvelyan, who, after the recent visit to Armenia, decided to support the Chambarak School. This time ARS granted the school with 50 school tables.

As a token of gratitude, the schoolchildren greeted the guests with patriotic songs, after which the school principal Zinaida Mkrtchyan warmly welcomed the guests. The welcoming ceremony concluded with the song “Hayastan”, which warmed up the hearts of the guests.

A new stage of cooperation has been established since then.

The Spirit of the New Year Cheered up the Computer Trainings for Unemployed

On January 13, 2006, the day of celebrating New Year according to the Julian Calendar, the Internet Computer Center (ICC) of Sisian Secondary School #2 was full of unemployed people. These were the people who regularly attend computer trainings organized in the framework of the State Project on Development Opportunities for the Unemployed People registered at the Sisian territorial center of employment.



Quarterly trainings in Computer Design for 10 unemployed people started on December 12, 2005. As a result of the trainings, the participants acquired new skills necessary to obtain new jobs. The training also brought the participants into contact with members of the local business community, which enabled the participants to expand their job contacts.

“We want to thank the ICC monitors for being kind and patient and we hope that after the training we would be skilled enough to get a good job”, said Lusine Matevosyan, one of the participants.

New Year – New Approaches



On December 19, 2005 an event called “New Year – New Approaches” took place in the Internet Computer Center (ICC) of Yerevan secondary school #67. This event concluded the project, which aimed at creating online educational resources and enriching the school online library with PowerPoint presentations on different subjects and school lessons. ICC monitor Gohar Davtyan organized the

project at the beginning of 2005-2006 academic year. The presentation designers were 10th grade students of the school, who will thus leave a heritage for the school before graduating. Having received training in Power Point, the students chose a subject and

designed a Power Point Presentation based on the topic. The subjects of the presentation included Armenian literature, Biology, Civics and the History of Armenia. The final presentation of the project, which was attended by such professionals as Artak Movsisyan, PH.D; Karen Tokhatyan, petroglypher; and Souren Martikyan, lecturer at the Military Academy, was followed by a lively discussion, where the professionals and schoolteachers commented on the works, made remarks, as well as outlined the strengths of the presentations and recommendations for improvement.

The project was a starting point for establishing an educational online library enabling the school to be equipped with online resources and use them during classes. Based on its success the board of the school directors made a decision to continue the project and make it one of the good traditions of the school.

Armenian Youth Business Strategy Recognized by International Panel



An international panel of judges awarded a team of Armenian youth with the “Young Scientist Achievers Award” for their participation in the Fall 2005 Ford Global Education Initiative (Ford GEI) Water Purification / Ecosystem Preservation Program. The team competed with participants from Azerbaijan, South Africa, Nigeria, India, and the U.S. Calling themselves “NATURE – New Approach to Using Resources of the Earth” the youth applied online research about water contamination towards the creation of a business plan using science to address local ecological health. Team NATURE received technical assistance and online project supervision via an Internet Computer Center at their school sponsored by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

Project Harmony Armenia collaborated with the John C. Ford Water Purification and Ecosystem Preservation program throughout Fall 2005. The goals of the project were to develop participants’ goal setting skills, international communication, research ability, global consciousness, and environmental awareness. Hripsime Osipyan, a student of Yerevan School #51 celebrated his accomplishment observing “I understand that paying for water is not the most important thing; you have to use it less and preserve.”

Armenian Middle School Principal Visits her Students' Pen Pals at Toll Middle School

Source: [Glendale News Press](http://www.glendalenewspress.com)

Published: Jan 11, 2006.

How the other half works: Armenian middle school principal visits her students' pen pals at Toll Middle School.

URL: <http://www.glendalenewspress.com/education/story/34952p-51671c.html>

By Tania Chatila

GLENDALE -- Of the many things Susanna Barseghyan observed about American schools and teaching methods Tuesday, teacher aids and the educational equipment at Toll Middle School fascinated her the most.

"The teacher aids are an excellent idea," said Barseghyan, principal of Ashtarak School #1 in Armenia.

"It's very interesting. I'm going to take [the idea] with me because one teacher for 35 students does not work."

Barseghyan spent one day visiting more than half a dozen classes at Toll -- all of different subjects -- in an effort to observe American teaching methods and practices.

"And because Glendale is heavily populated with Armenian students, she would like to know how well students are adapting to this country," said Angie Mathevosian, Barseghyan's interpreter and escort Tuesday.



Ashtarak School # 1 Principal Susanna Barseghyan visits parter school in California

Mathevosian, an English language development teacher at Toll, is involved in a program implemented by Project Harmony – an organization established in Vermont about 20 years ago -- which connects students in America with students in other countries through technology, like the Internet.

Fifteen of Mathevosian's level one and two English language development students are currently involved in the program, and are communicating with 15 eighth-graders at Barseghyan's school.

Mathevosian has collaborated a year-long lesson plan with the teacher at Ashtarak School No. 1, who teaches the 15 students Mathevosian's students communicate with.

The lesson plan includes responses to literature, essays, research and Web forums.

The students e-mail each other frequently, learn about each other's cultures and discuss school-related topics, she said.

"Even though they are language learners, the students are very interested to send messages and learn through the computer," Mathevosian said. "It makes them more motivated to learn to read and write."

Barseghyan, who leaves Saturday, came to America for personal reasons, but said she wanted to take the opportunity while she was here to not only observe American schools, but also put a face to the children her students talk with on a weekly basis.

"It's a first time experience," she said. "I was very much excited to see the students who we are working with."

While Barseghyan feels the student participation in America is not as enthusiastic as that of Armenian students, based on what she saw Tuesday, she is very interested in integrating group participation into Ashtarak's lesson plans, she said.

"I am into the group work because there are slow learners and some are not as motivated," she said.

"When you sit in groups, automatically you get help. You will be encouraged to learn, and that's very effective."

Local Students Learn Alongside Armenians Via Internet Project

Source: Gazette.NET

Published: Dec 1, 2005.

Local students learn alongside Armenians via Internet project

URL: http://www.gazette.net/stories/120105/urbanew205351_31924.shtml

By Keith L. Martin

Hillary Frankowiak and David Manasaryan talk almost every day about the same things any middle school friends do: their families, upcoming holidays, likes and

dislikes and other topics. What makes their conversations unique, however, is that they occur 5,800 miles apart, with Frankowiak in Frederick and Manasaryan in Armenia.

Frankowiak is one of 10 students in Martin O'Brien's eighth-grade social studies class at the Maryland School for the Deaf's Frederick campus participating in the Armenian School Connectivity Program. The program is sponsored by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs and carried out by Project



Shayna Rose Unger, a student in Martin O'Brien's eighth-grade social studies class at the Maryland School for the Deaf in Frederick, shares her thoughts with students in Armenia, via the Internet. Photo by Bill Ryan/The Gazette

Harmony, an organization that promotes international student interaction.

One such way is linking a school in the United States with one in Armenia to discuss social issues in their countries.

In July, O'Brien traveled to Armenia with 14 other U.S. educators to meet their international counterparts and develop a theme for the project. After meeting with Aida Elchibekyan, an English teacher at Yerevan Secondary School No. 67 in Armenia's capital, the pair decided that their focus would be

independence and democracy.

Each classroom is examining the theme through online discussion boards and other technology presentations to express how their own democratic societies developed.

"This goes much deeper than a traditional pen pal program, although we are working with teenagers, so we are still seeing some social issues discussed," O'Brien said.

"Through the Internet, we are able to bring outside cultures into our classroom immediately."

O'Brien said the project's use of online postings and video has allowed seamless interaction between deaf students in Frederick and hearing students in Armenia.

"I actually visited a school for the deaf [in Armenia] they originally wanted us to partner with, but the problem is that they don't learn English," he said. "They sign in Armenian and we sign in English, so there would be more communication barriers by working with another deaf school."

Since the launch of two-way communication between Frederick and Yerevan in October, students have introduced themselves with short biographies, discussed what democracy means to them, and the Frederick students have been posting information from a class project on the American Revolution. Soon, Armenian students will be posting pictures of cultural sites in their city with explanations and history on these locations.

“Our students love the personal connection of learning from another student overseas,” O’Brien said. “I can talk in the classroom about these things, but when another student who is there talks to them about these topics, it is phenomenal and quite beneficial.”

Students are not only acting as cultural educators with online postings, but are also preparing movies to share with each other. O’Brien’s students are adding captions to a movie they shot in Washington, D.C., explaining various monuments and buildings and their place in U.S. history.

“[Students] were the producers of this movie, from writing the scripts to filming each other as they signed information to the camera talking about various places,” O’Brien said.

In return, Armenian students are compiling a video of interviews with people, including their own grandparents, about life under the former Soviet Union and Armenia’s independence beginning in 1991.

O’Brien’s students are anxiously awaiting the finishing touches on both videos, but in the meantime are enjoying the online chats about life in both countries.

The web-savvy Frankowiak has been teaching her new friends Instant Messenger-speak such as “ttyl” (talk to you later), while in return, picking up some basic Armenian, such as teacher (“usutsich”) and school (“dprot”).

“I’ve learned different words and different facts about their lives, like having no Thanksgiving or celebrating Christmas in January,” she said.

Classmate Corinna Hill recently posted a short report on the Boston Massacre for students in Armenia to read about and said she likes learning from their posts as well.

“I like their views on what democracy means to them,” she said. “I like comparing our view and theirs.”

In addition to enlightening their Armenian counterparts with the Washington, D.C. video, student Shayna Unger also hopes the other students find a little humor in its amateur production.

“I like when we messed up again and again, so they’ll get to see our bloopers,” she said.

With the success of this year’s partnership, O’Brien has not ruled out working with a deaf school overseas, however. In fact, he thinks that by using photographs and drawings, language barriers can be overcome between both schools.

Conference Highlights Community Engagement and Cross-Cultural Collaboration

URL: <http://www.projectharmony.org/cgi-bin/pubs/news/show.pl?index=1129150870>

On October 7-10, 2005 Project Harmony’s Armenia School Connectivity Program conducted a teacher training conference in Warren, VT for its current fifteen teaching partners who participated in the School Partner Exchange in 2005 and five veteran teachers who participated in 2004. The Teacher Training Conference is a component of the Armenia School Connectivity Program, a program of the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

The conference held at Sugarbush Resort in Warren, VT focused on enhancing the participating teachers’ understanding and competency in the subjects of online web forums, project development, online facilitation, cross-cultural collaborative learning, and community engagement. The training was considered a success by participants who left with the practical tools and experience needed to move forward with their partnership projects. During the two-day training, in an impromptu wireless computer lab created specifically for this conference, Project Harmony staff members, Mark Lydon, Shawn Umansky and Artyom Popov gave a detailed training session on the use of web forums and the customization of web forum space. They explained the features and tools of the new online web forum and allowed ample time for the teachers to ask questions and practice using the various online tools. On Sunday morning two veteran School Partner Exchange participants, Sylvia Koester and Christa Bruce delivered a presentation on methods for community outreach, collaborative student work, identifying community needs, and focusing on community service. This presentation provided inspiration and valuable insight into project development, helped teachers to think about their individual projects in a



ASCP Participant Sylvia Koester training mentees

more focused way, and highlighted the importance of community service and volunteer-oriented collaborative project outcomes.

Despite the rainy weather, participants were able to take in some Vermont culture: the beautiful Vermont foliage, a tour of the Ben & Jerry's factory and an evening together singing songs by the campfire. As the teachers departed Vermont, they expressed their appreciation and noted how valuable the training was for them. They walked away educated, empowered and confident with their newly acquired abilities.

For more information on Project Harmony's SCP programs and opportunities to participate, please contact scp@projectharmony.org.

ASCP Participant Wins Corporate Funding to Advance Classroom Internationalism

URL: <http://www.projectharmony.org/cgi-bin/pubs/news/show.pl?index=1137599605>

As a proud recipient of a \$2,500 Best Buy Te@ch Award, Ms. Deborah Stapleton of Dr. Howard Elementary School, Champaign, Illinois, credits the Department of State-funded Armenia School Connectivity Program for her winning application. Ms. Stapleton's class engages in a collaborative international partnership with an



Dr. Howard School community members painting a world map on school grounds.

Armenian partner school. With limited new technology at her school, Ms. Stapleton models and discusses on-line connectivity with one computer and an LED projector. Students then use technology from home to complete their American-Armenian conversations. Ms. Stapleton's students' international outreach will now be expanded by more in-classroom access to technology. A program participant for over 12 months, Ms. Stapleton's classroom has painted a world map on school grounds, discussed social justice

issues with Armenian students, performed monthly community service, and received highly positive local media coverage as a result of their educational exchange.

Select schools demonstrated that their students are using technology in interactive and engaging ways. Te@ch grants are intended to help schools to expand or enhance the program described in the application.